

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
CHAIRMAN

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK
JOHN A. YARMUTH, KENTUCKY
BRUCE L. BRALEY, IOWA
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BETTY McCOLLUM, MINNESOTA
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
PAUL W. HODES, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
JOHN P. SARBANES, MARYLAND
PETER WELCH, VERMONT

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051

FACSIMILE (202) 225-4784

MINORITY (202) 225-5074

www.oversight.house.gov

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

DAN BURTON, INDIANA
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO
DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA
BRIAN P. BILBRAY, CALIFORNIA
BILL SALI, IDAHO
JIM JORDAN, OHIO

October 19, 2007

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C., 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman:

I write to request that you convene a hearing on the recent occurrences of the potentially deadly bacteria, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA. MRSA infections are a major public health problem and are more widespread than previously thought.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, citing a report released Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “nearly 19,000 Americans died in 2005 of invasive infections caused by drug-resistant staphylococcus bacteria – more than were killed by AIDS.”¹ The CDC study shows that each year more than 90,000 Americans will contract MRSA and approximately 19,000 will die from the infection.²

Numerous cases have been reported in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. region and tragically, this week in Bedford County, Virginia a teenage football player succumbed to what is being referred to as the “superbug.” In addition, Montgomery County schools reported fourteen cases, Fairfax and Prince William County each reported six cases, Anne Arundel County schools reported one case, and Howard County reported two cases. While this may not sound like a large amount, there seem to be several diagnoses pending laboratory results in the various suburban counties.

Nationwide, MRSA has led to numerous school closings and extracurricular activity cancellations this week. Officials in Connecticut, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, and Virginia took steps to curtail the spread of infection in schools. Some schools are spending significant amounts of money on sophisticated

¹ Judith Graham, *Superbug Deaths May Top AIDS; 19,000 Fatalities a Year, Study Says*, *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 17, 2007, at C3.

² See <http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/2007/r071016.htm>.

sanitization methods and are taking small precautionary steps, such as spraying weight-lifting and football equipment with disinfectant. Rappahannock County, Virginia schools reportedly spent in excess of \$10,000 to cleanup hallways and classrooms.³

The committee should hold a hearing to examine the following aspects of this troubling development: 1) what the flurry of superbug reports portends; 2) possible causes for the upsurge in infections; 3) prevention initiatives and testing; 4) appropriate treatment regimens; 5) costs incurred as result of outbreaks; and 6) the possibility of mandatory reporting of incidences. We cannot afford to wait. Parents are understandably frightened that MRSA infections, once thought to be relegated to the health care system, now appear to be penetrating our schools, athletic venues, prisons, and community centers. Dr. Elizabeth A. Bancroft, an epidemiologist with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health called "[T]he spread of resistant organisms 'astounding.'"⁴

I welcome the opportunity to work with you to raise awareness of this threat to public health. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Tom Davis
Ranking Member

³ Susan Levine and William Wan, *As Cases Arise, Schools Act to Ward Off Virulent Staph*, Washington Post, Oct. 18, 2007, at B1.

⁴ Thomas H. Maugh, II, *Deadly 'Superbug' Infections Spread*, Los Angeles Times, Oct. 17, 2007, at A1.